

## AND NOT THAT DIFFICULT

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(adapted from the May – June 1998 MRS Newsletter)

This article, written by June and Al Ford, first appeared in the May-June, 1992, *MRS Newsletter*. It is reproduced here for the interest of those new members who have thought about exhibiting their roses but may have felt it was too difficult. It will probably be of value also as a refresher to members who have exhibited before.

Start early to think about getting your roses ready for presentation. Some exhibitors prune parts of each bush 40-45 days before a show. (This would be April 23-28 for our show.) For hybrid teas, prune to an outside bud-eye, and a new stem will grow from the bud and in time produce a bloom. If you don't want to do this pruning--and it is more feasible for a summer or fall show--just start watching your bushes about three weeks before the show to see what buds will form.

If you want to exhibit a hybrid tea, there should be only one bloom to a stem. If you have a center bud and a side bud or shoots, nip off ("finger prune") the side buds and/or shoots, including any leaf parts. Do this while the buds are very small (about ¼ to ½ inch). For a floribunda or grandiflora spray, however, the center bud of the group of florets should be nipped off; otherwise, it will open well before the other buds and will be spent when the other blooms are coming into their prime. This pruning should be done also when the buds are very small, so that scars will heal and other buds will tend to fill the space.

The most important ingredient for healthy roses is water, and as we are constantly reminded, give the roses at least one inch per week--2 to 5 inches are better. You will have fertilized in the spring after pruning, but exhibitors like to use some fish emulsion and/or 20-20-20 systemic (Peters or equivalent) fertilizer two weeks and then one week before the show. Follow the directions on the material's label.

Plan ahead which classes you wish to enter; read over the program for the show. You can enter the roses singly (alphabetically), or in groups of two, three or five hybrid tea roses of different varieties.

If you have facilities for refrigeration, some roses may be picked or cut as far ahead as a week before the show. A number of exhibitors prefer to cut their roses for exhibition two days before and the day before they will exhibit them. Look over your roses every day to see how they are coming along. You will want to cut them while still in bud form, but the sepals must be down or the bud will not open properly. Also select a good long stem, preferably straight. When exhibiting, the stem should be 18 to 20 inches for the best proportion. You will see stems on exhibition roses even longer. Some larger blooms, like **Uncle Joe**, justify an even longer stem. The key is that the length of a stem should be in proportion to the size of the bloom. A small bloom on a 24 inch stem is not in balance.

Cut your roses early in the morning or in the evening, putting each one immediately into a bucket of warm water. Some rosarians prefer late afternoon cutting because the "sap is high," and thus freshness is preserved. A good habit to get into when cutting roses for a show is to identify them before cutting or just after. An unidentified bucket of roses may present a real challenge at a later time, and an incorrectly identified rose will be reason for disqualification by rose show judges.

When the roses are brought inside they should be “conditioned,” that is, made ready for the show. They should be inspected individually and cleaned and groomed as required. Any spray residue or other loose leaf-surface imperfections should be removed with a damp cloth, old stocking or paper towel. If a petal has a ragged edge or a leaf has a hole chewed out, trim carefully with small scissors to approximate the original (but smaller) shape. To “condition” the roses, cut the stems again under water, about ½ inch above the first cut. Immerse in very warm water, up to the bloom (if possible), for fifteen minutes, then place in very cold water. Ice cubes may be added to the water to reduce the temperature even further. To protect leaves from the thorns of other stem, you may wrap each stem and bloom in freezer paper. The roses then should be placed in a cool dark area until they are transported to the show.

When you take your hybrid tea or single stem grandiflora roses to the show, only a few petals should be coming down, because the bloom will open more before it is judged. The ideal phase for exhibiting a hybrid tea or single stem grandiflora bloom is 2/3 to 3/4 open. If the bloom is not sufficiently open, the petals can be encouraged to open further by using wedges between sets of petals of cotton balls or Q-tips. You may also see exhibitors blowing their warm breath on the bloom or placing the exhibit in a sunny spot to encourage it to open further. Judges often speak of a bloom which has not opened enough as being “too tight,” and one that has opened too much as “blown.” Figures 1 & 2 will help you to identify the ideal bloom, but remember less than the ideal hybrid tea or single stem grandiflora bloom still may be worthy of recognition and a ribbon.

### **Figure 1**

Seen from above, the ideal single bloom will have a circular form, (See Figure 1), and from the side, a pyramid form (See Figure 2) The center should be high and petals unfurling symmetrically with no balling or split centers of the bloom.

### **Figure 2**

In the case of floribundas or grandiflora sprays, you must have an exhibit of at least two blooms. One bloom and a bud does not constitute a spray. It is unlikely that a spray with so few blooms will receive recognition. When two specimens of the same variety are compared, the more florets the better. Sprays may be exhibited that have all blooms at or near the same stage of development or that exhibit varying stages of development from bud to fully open. What is customary for the variety is the guide.

The spray outline should be rounded (convex, not concave see Figure 3), and from the top it should look like a circle, oval or any other geometric form pleasing to the eye. If you haven't previously cut out the blooms that have or will open too soon, or don't conform to the outline, do this before placing the spray in the show (See Figure 4). The circled parts shown in Figure 4 should be removed by cutting the stem back as close as possible to the main stem. The resulting scar may be the cause of point score deduction by the judges, but the exhibit will fare much better than if the objectionable foliage and bloom is left unattended.

### **Figure 3**

Blooms are also judged on color and substance. The color should be characteristic of the variety, but

#### **Figure 4**

without streaks or blotches. Roses with good substance are velvety or satiny, not crepey or dull. Remember that approximately 75% of the points awarded to an entry are attributable to the bloom. (For those interested in details of the point scoring system, see end of this article.)

Miniatures can be exhibited with the same general guidelines as indicated above, except of course stem length, which should be in proportion to the smaller bloom--about 6 to 8". Some miniature varieties will not have high centers, but will be judged according to best form for the variety.

Polyanthas will be judged by the same standards as floribundas. Climbers and Old Garden Roses and Shrubs will generally have shorter stems than hybrid teas or floribundas, and will not be penalized for this.

If you have any questions about these directions, ask any of our able Consulting Rosarians listed on the back of the *Newsletter*.

Remember--plan ahead, water, watch, select, condition, groom, and enter your roses in the rose show, and may you be very happy with the ribbons you'll win!

#### **POINT SCORING SYSTEM FOR JUDGING**

Form	25 points
Color	20 points
Substance	15 points
Stem & Foliage	20 points
Balance & Proportion	10 points
Size	10 points

The Figures for this article were reproduced from The American Rose Society's "Guidelines for Judging Roses."

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